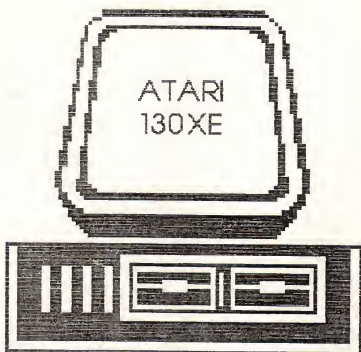


SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1984

# ATARI 8-BIT ALIVE

**LET'S TALK ATARI!**



## **INSIDE:**

SPARTADOS TUTORIAL  
ATARIWRITER REVIEW  
CONNECTING A HARD DRIVE  
LATEST 8-BIT NEWS

VOL. 1, ISSUE 3

# ADDRESS PAGE

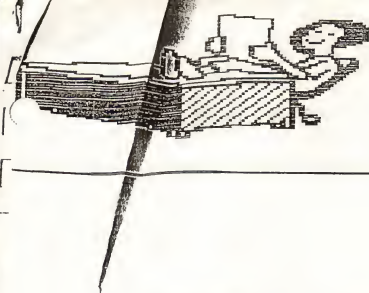
As the editor of this magazine, I think it is important that you are able to get in touch with me at all times.

I can be reached by one of five ways:

U.S. Mail: Mr. Damon Walker  
RD#1 Box 62  
Salem, NJ 08079

Genie: B.WALKER26  
Internet: B.WALKER26@GENIE.GEIS.COM  
Fidonet: Node 1:266/52  
Phone: (609) 299-4667





# EDITOR'S NOTES

---

Welcome back! I'd like to begin this issue by first thanking all of you for supporting the 8-bit and this magazine. I hope you enjoy this issue. I'd like to mention that this issue was completely typed with my Atari 130XE. I have finished my upgrades, so I am now able to use my 8-bit to the fullest extent of its ability.

If you have read the address page, you may have noticed that I have switched from CompuServe to Genie. I switched because I was starting to spend so much time in the Atari Forum that I was getting ungodly bills. Since Genie is cheaper to spend time in the Round Tables, and has more 8-bit users, I decided to switch. I'm going to miss the many services CompuServe had to offer, but I really need to communicate and work with other 8-biters.

I also want to thank everyone who sent responses to the last issue. There were plentiful and helpful. Most of the people who

responded to the second issue liked it better than the first. I am pleased to see that I have been improving and I hope it continues. Please, if you have any comments on the magazine, let me know. I am always open to suggestions.

## What's Inside

Inside this issue, there is more information than I had in either one of the previous issues. The News and Announcements section is full of 8-bit news, most of which are topics you've probably been wondering about. The Software Reviews has an article on AtariWriter and a Spartados Tutorial, plus a little more. The Game Room has a review on the most challenging game I've ever seen and the 8-bit Tip of the Month. The 8-bit On-Line section contains an article on an offline reader for CompuServe's message forums. It also has Genie, CompuServe, and Findonet News. The Hardware section contains an interesting article on how I connected a hard drive to my MIO. The Reference Section has a list

of 8-bit dealers, user  
groups, and BBS s. So sit  
back, in front of your  
8-bit, and enjoy.



# 8-BIT NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ATARI  
8-BIT  
NEWS

There is a lot going on this month in the Atari 8-Bit World, and a lot I haven't found out about until this month. So brace yourself for the information you are about to receive. It can help you get much more out of your 8-Bit.

## FTE Update

Fine Tooned Engineering has been working extremely hard on all of its 8-Bit projects. There is still no set date on when these new and upgraded products will be released, but there coming. Most of us can't wait. I was able to talk to Mike at Fine Tooned Engineering. He gave me some information on the MIO II, FTE plans to release. The purpose of the MIO II is strictly a hard drive interface, that is low cost. As of now it does have not have a printer port, or a RS232 port. It will hopefully allow 8-Bitters to connect some of the newer IDE hard drives to their computers. As of now, FTE is shooting to make this available for under \$80. There is a lot of discussion

about this product on the Genie BBS and Fidonet.

I was also able to talk with Kyle Dain, who is working with Mike on the Mars8 project, at the Connecticut Atarifest. He represented FTE there and showed some of FTE's projects. Unfortunately, he didn't have a Mars8 ready for show. I was, however, very impressed with the Express cartridge he had to show and the new Sparados X cartridge. I can't wait for these products to be released. To get in touch with FTE call (408) GET-REAL or (800) For-6502. You can also leave E-mail on Genie 'F.TOONED' or Internet 'F.TOONED@Genie.Geis.com'.

## Connecticut Atarifest Results

I'm glad I was able to attend the Connecticut Atarifest this year. It was a great show. Full of Atari dealers and products, this was a truly spectacular event. Though it was mostly ST and Jaguar based, it did include some 8-Bit products, and I definitely enjoyed it.

Dealers that attended included:  
Oregon Research Associates,  
Software Specturme, Youch  
Software, Micro Computer  
Depot, MagicSoft, WMAUS, A&D  
Soware, SSAG, Derric  
electronics, Binary Sounds,  
Fine Ktooned Engineering,  
East Harford Computer  
Repair, Corporate Computer  
Consulting, aCT Atari Group,  
Wizztronics, Best  
Electronics, Steinberg  
Jones, Suzy-b Software, and  
Lexieor Software.

If you missed the show  
this year, please try to  
attend next years. It s  
sure worthe the time.

#### Release of TExtpro 5.20xe

The latest version of  
Textpro has finally been  
finished and released.  
Congradulations to Ronnie  
Riche. Version 5.20 is a  
smash. It has many new  
add-ing and elimated the  
screen scrolling, making it a  
whole lot faster. Textpro  
5.20xe is shareware, and  
available at the Tacobell  
BBS '904' 785-2333.

#### XE Touch

There have been many  
complaints about the  
keyboard touch of the 130xe.  
Most people claim the touch  
to be muggy, causing missed  
keys when word processing.  
Best Electronics has a  
solution, an inexpensive set  
of rubber pieces that fit  
under the keys on the  
kevbboard. They give the

keyboard a PC feel, making  
wordprocessing much easier..  
Give Best a call '408)  
243-6950. This isn't  
anything new, but I d just  
found out about it a couple  
of months ago, and maybe you  
haven't heard about it.

#### Graphics Terminal Program

I couple of month s  
ago, I was serchng for a new  
and different terminal  
program, and I found just  
that. An 80 column terminal  
that operates completely  
using graphics icons. For  
instance, if you want to  
print the screen, you use  
the joystick to point to  
the picture of a printer,  
and "whammo" it prints  
everything on the current  
screen to the printer. It s  
a neat terminal that works  
at both 300 and 1200bps. It  
also supports X-modem  
protocol file transfers. I  
don't think this is new, but  
it's interesting. I  
donwloaded it from  
Compuserve 'Lib 6.  
GTerm9RX.ARC', just in case  
you wanted to try it. It  
does suppport 80 columns  
without any additional  
hardware and without any  
loss of characters.

#### DJinni, Genie Front Door Program

This is an  
extraordinary program that  
automates manyfunctions on  
Genie. this program will  
log on to Genie, capture  
Genie mail, upload mail,  
capture new BBS messages to  
a disk, post replies, get a  
list of new files, upload  
files, download files, and  
log off, all at the touch of





ATARI  
ONLINE

**GENIE**

**INFORMATION SERVICE**



*Genie has the most to offer for your Atari 8-Bit. Online conferences are held weekly, files are uploaded daily, and the message bases area always busy. In addition, take advantage of other online services such as Genie's shopping services, references services, and Electronic Mail. Don't wait any longer.*

**CALL 1-800-638-9636.**

a button. Things that would take me 20 minutes, take DJinni 2 minutes. I couldn't believe it. In addition to its incredible speed, it also supports Y-modem and Z-modem. It can log on at 300-9600bps, and supports most modems. It is sort of like Aladdin for the ST. If you are a Genie user, this is a must have. I will be doing a review on it next issue. Again this program is not brand new, but some people, as my self, may not of heard of it. I wish they had something like this for Compuserve. The program is available in the Genie File Library 'DJinni.Arc'. Try it!

#### Best Electronics New Catalog

Best Electronics is printing another catalog, Revision 10. It as been put on hole again because they just acquired some new parts from the Atari Corporation, and they wanted to include these partes in the new catalog. The new catalog is supposed to be 250 pages or greater. To recieve information on how to get this catalog, call Best Electronics, and ask to be put on their mailing list, (408) 243-6950.

#### New Interface From CSS

Computer Software Services, the makers of the infamous Black Box, are working on a new RS232 interface. Supposedly, it will support the higher speed modems that the P:R: Connection and the 850

interface couldn't. It is not ready yet, and CSS is not sure when it will be ready, but rest assured it will be a smash.


#### B&C Computervisions Move

Our great 8-Bit commercial software supporter, B&C Computervisions, has a new address:

B&C Computervisions  
1725 DE Le Cruz Blvd.  
Santa Clara, CA 95050-3011  
(408) 986-9960

That s all for this month's news and announcements. I hope you enjoy the rest of the magazine.





# SOFTWARE

## REVIEWS



### COMPARING WORD PROCESSORS - PART I REVIEW ON ATARIWRITER

Many of us use our computers for word processing at one time or another. Face it. It's faster, more readable, easy to make changes with, and with a spell check, less susceptible to errors. A computer, however, cannot perform this task very well without a word processing program. The better the program, the better your finished product will look. In this 4-part series, we will take a look at a few of the best known, and most widely used word processors for the 8-bit.

First let me start off by saying that your finished product, though depending a little on your word processing program, depends heavily on your printer. If you do not have an Atari XM801 or Graphic compatible dot matrix printer (preferably Epson compatible), you might want to consider purchasing one. I don't know how I ever lived without one. As far as daisy wheel printers go, the XDM121 will probably

give you the best results.

Getting back to the topic of word processors, there are four major word processors. I plan to write a separate article on each one. They are Atariwriter, Atariwriter Plus, Textpro, and 1st Xlent Wordprocessor. This article will focus on Atariwriter.

Atariwriter is probably the best known wordprocessor for the 8-bit. It was released in 1984 by the Atari Corporation and works with all Atari 8-bit computers. It comes on a cartridge, so it is fast loading. This wordprocessor produces extremely good output pretty easily, but it does have some disadvantages. It is menu driven for the main commands, such as Load, Save, Print, etc, but formatting commands are all entered as text in the editor. Since the program was made so long ago, there are many upgrades you can purchase. Let's take a closer look at the program,

me, it doesn't matter.

shall we?

### The Main Menu

The Main Menu is very clear and distinct. What the command says is what it does. The main menu includes the following commands: CREATE FILE, EDIT FILE, DELETE FILE, LOAD FILE, INDEX OF FILES, SAVE FILE, PRINT FILE. CREATE FILE takes you to the editor, where you can begin typing your document. EDIT FILE allows you to make changes or add text to a document once it has already been started. DELETE FILE erases a saved file from a disk. LOAD FILE recalls a saved file to the editor. INDEX OF FILES lists the disk directory. SAVE FILE saves the document currently in the editor. PRINT FILE prints the document currently in the editor to PL:. That's all there is to the Main Menu. Simple, but effective.

### THE EDITOR

The editor is where you will spend most of your time when using the program. This is where you create and edit your document. To create a document once in the editor, just begin typing. The editor is a blank screen, with formatting commands at the top and a line/column summary at the bottom. You always type in insert mode, which to some people, might be considered a disadvantage. Luckily for

While typing your document, there are many commands that can help make your document more attractive. These commands are entered as text, using the control and select keys. Most of the commands send codes to your printer to activate different features of your printer, which means not all of them can be used with all printers. These commands include:  
CONTROL C: Centers text/twice to block text to the right  
SELECT E: Elongated Print on/off  
CONTROL F: Footnotes  
CONTROL H: Headers  
CONTROL H/F+0: Header or Footer page numbering  
CONTROL E: Page Break  
CONTROL W: Wait before printing next page  
CONTROL P: Indent Paragraph  
CONTROL W: Wait before printing next page; allows you to insert paper in printer  
CONTROL P: Indent Paragraph  
CONTROL U: Underlining on/off

There are also many commands to help with editing a document. The commands include:  
SELECT S: Search and replace  
CONTROL X: Mark text to be worked with  
OPTION D: Delete marked text  
SELECT DELETE: Delete to the end of a file  
OPTION D: Duplicate marked text  
START + INSERT: Replace deleted text  
SELECT B: Move to the

bottom of the document  
SELECT J: Move to the top  
of the document

### Formatting

Atariwriter has many different formatting commands. Some of them are automatically set at the top of the editor. These include:  
left-right-top-bottom margins, print style, page length, spacing, spaces between paragraphs and unjustified right margins. They appear at the top of the screen every time you "pop" the Atariwriter cartridge in. They are your overall formatting commands, and can be changed by simply positioning the cursor to the character you want to change, deleting that character, and entering a new one. For instance, if I wanted to change the left margin, I would position the cursor in front of the characters that say L10, delete the 10, and put the number I want as the left margin. (The L is a control character and will appear on the screen as an inverse L).

I can also change the margin in the middle of my text, simply by typing the control L and the number of spaces I want the margin to be. This feature helps when formatting your documents to be printed in two columns. You can do this with any of the overall formatting commands.

### Printing a File

Printing with Atariwriter is

easy, no matter what kind of Atari printer you own. Atariwriter comes with print drivers supporting all of the known Atari printers. (There are two cartridges; each has a different set of printer drivers). Make sure you get the right cartridge for your printer. To print a document, just select PRINT FILE from the Main Menu, select one of the 4 drivers, choose whether you want to print the entire document or a portion of the document, type the number of copies, and print away. It's easy!

### Other Features

One of the main features of Atariwriter and the feature I appreciate the most is the ability to print in dual columns, easily. All you have to do is enter the following command at the top of your document:  
CONTROL-L10 CONTROL-R37  
CONTROL-M43 CONTROL-N70.  
It's easy. This feature is the main reason I use Atariwriter. I use this feature to type "Atari 8-Bit Alive".

### Additions

There have been many additions to Atariwriter since the program was first released. Most of these features were added by Atari users themselves, instead of by the Atari Corporation. There are two major upgrades for Atariwriter that are the most popular among the 8-bit public. They are Atariwriter Proof Reader and

Atariwriter Print Driver  
Construction set.

The Proof Reader is the most valuable addition to me. It checks your documents for typos and misspellings. You load the program with Atariwriter, and it adds a spell check command to the Main Menu. It is compatible with DOS 2.x and 3.0. It comes with a dictionary disk with over 36,000 words in it! With the Proof Reader, you can search the dictionary for the correct spelling of words, highlight your errors, print your errors, or simply correct them as they are found. You can also correct only part of document if you wish. One disadvantage to this program is it is very slow when checking documents, unless you have a US Doubler or copy the dictionary disk to a Hard Drive. But, it still does the job!

The Print Driver Construction Set is a program that let's you customize your print driver, so you can print your Atariwriter files to non-Atariwriter printers. This is also a valuable upgrade, however, I use my Atari XDM121 to print most of this magazine. Therefore, it is not as valuable to me as the Proof Reader. I do need it, though. That's for sure.

There are also many other add-ins for this well known program. Hopefully, I

will be able to bring you an article on some of them soon.

### Conclusion

Atariwriter is one of the best wordprocessing programs for the Atari 8-bit. It is fairly easy, and is worth all of the \$19.95 it costs and more. It is available at almost any Atari dealer such as BSC Computers, Toad Computers and American Technavision.

## SpartaDOS TUTORIAL - Part 1

Written by: Mister <Z> Himself  
(c) Network: Atari Express! BBS

512-662-9764 (Voice)  
512-662-9765 (Modem)  
(Any Time or Baud)

```
*****  
*   Commands Covered in Part #1   *  
*   -----   *  
*   DIR, DIRS, CAR, BASIC ON/OFF, *  
*   FORMAT, INIT, AINIT, XINIT,  *  
*   and CHKDSK                     *  
*****
```

Throughout this tutorial I will be making reference to many companies. All of these companies have their own respective Trademarks and Copyrights, and total respect, of course, has been rendered to all these fine organizations.

This tutorial is centered on learning to operate, on an actively functional basis, the SpartaDOS Construction Set (SDCS). I will attempt to relate the operational capabilities of this Disk Operating System (DOS), created for use on all of the Atari 8-Bit machines.

Opinions expressed within this data base are my own, and may not accurately reflect the full potential of either the SDCS, produced by ICD, Inc., in Illinois, or all of the Atari computers produced by Atari Corp., in California.

In order to understand most of the information written herein, you MUST have a copy of the SDCS and be able to refer to the extensive manual that comes with it. I'll be referring to many pages within this manual as the tutorial proceeds.

Therefore, if you haven't already purchased this far superior DOS, please do so before you continue with the tutorial. If you don't, you WILL miss out on many important facts.

The SDCS was built specifically with the Atari 8-Bit computer in mind. It's chock full of some of the most creative programs available, and easy to use (after you read the manual).

At this point, I must assume you are familiar with Atari DOS

(any version), and also familiar, at least a little, with your computer.

If you have any technical questions about either of these things, an excellent source of help is from a local User Group. They are designed (or at least should be) to help the beginner learn the ropes of their new computers. Please support your local User Group.

Basically, a DOS is used to help your computer communicate with your disk drive. This includes any drive made for the Atari system. There are many Atari-oriented companies that make disk drives. Any of these will do, but SpartaDOS itself may not work on all drives.

The SDCS was designed as a tool for creating your own working environment on a personalized level. Since everyone has a different purpose for using the SDCS, you are able to create and use a specialized variety of one or more programs found on either of the two master disks that come with the it.

When you open up the package, you'll find 3 things:

<1> The SDCS Manual (Over 160 pages of indepth information for both the beginner and the most experienced person).

<2> A Black-Labeled Disk

<3> A Grape-Labeled Disk.

Both of the disks are MASTER disks, and are formatted in single density (I'll explain densities later).

The disk with the BLACK LABEL has the latest version of SpartaDOS (currently 2.3x and/or 3.2d), along with all the associated files that work under this version.

This disk is to be used on any XL/XE Atari computer. If you try to use this disk on any other computer, an error message will appear on your TV/Monitor screen.

The disk with the GRAPE LABEL has version 1.x, and is used on the Atari 400/800 computers. On the back of this disk is a demo of LOGOMENU.SYS, and I'll show you how to do this when we get to it.

At this time, the manual goes into lengthy detail on how to make a duplicate MASTER DISK. Please follow those instructions, and you'll have a backup that you can safely use.



ALWAYS use the backup when working with SpartaDOS (or ANY disk that you have), and store the ORIGINAL MASTER away in a safe place.

Nothing will hurt you more than making a mistake on the MASTER disk, and losing all of the files on it.

If this happens, you'll be drifting down the well-known creek without a paddle. I have a paddle, but sorry...I don't loan paddles out to drifters.

The first thing you'll notice upon booting this disk is the fact that there is NO MENU!!! This is because you are now using an advanced system, and it is called a COMMAND Processor DOS.

Simply put, you type in a command using the correct format (SYNTAX), and SpartaDOS processes it as you typed it. If it's a legal command it'll work, if not, it won't. How easy can this be?

SYNTAX is a word that you should really understand when typing in commands. The dictionary defines SYNTAX as: "The way in which words are put together to form phrases and sentences. Grammar."

Each command that you use is used in a special format, or SYNTAX, depending upon what you want the command to do. The manual shows you many examples of each command, and what will happen when the correct SYNTAX is typed in.

Basically, every command has a SYNTAX. Follow the SYNTAX, or something will happen that you didn't plan on. This, is sometimes destructive not only to your files on the disk, but also to your sanity. CHECK THE SYNTAX!!!

Ok, taking the place of the old Atari DOS menu, is a simple "D1:" prompt on the left side of the screen like you see below.

(NOTE: From this point on, I will put all the examples that I use between  
- 's to clarify what you should see.

---  
D1:  
---

SpartaDOS will "default" to D1: whenever you boot the DOS

disk. Once DOS is booted, you can change the D1: prompt to any other drive number from D1: to D8:.

To do that, you simply type the drive number that you want, in the following format:

```
-----  
D1:Dn:<CR>  
-----
```

"n" Equals any number between 1 and 8. "<CR>" means to hit RETURN. The result ( if we typed in "D4:" ), would look like this:

```
---  
D4:  
---
```

From this point on, any command that you give will be done using drive #4 as the default drive. Please change this to any active drive number that you are currently using. You can change it at any time.

One of the first things you'll want to do is to see what's on the disk, but THERE'S NO MENU!! Remember, this DOS is a COMMAND Processor DOS. Therefore, you have to give it a COMMAND for it to function properly.

Let's look at some of those commands, starting with one that will allow you to get a directory listing of the disk contents.

Again, we are looking at commands that are the most common, and we'll work up to the more complex ones as we progress through this tutorial. This makes learning easier, and retention better.

While sitting at the Dn: prompt, type in "DIRS" and then <CR> like this:

```
-----  
D1:DIRS<CR>  
-----
```

You can think of DIRS as a "DIRectory of Sectors". The COMMAND "DIRS" will actually give you an ATARI DOS 2.x-type directory listing that looks like:

```
-----  
MYFILE.BAS    020
```

```
*TESTFILE.COM 012
YOURFILE.TXT 101
HISFILE.LST 224
(etc...)
```

nnn FREE SECTORS

-----

Does this look familiar to you? It should if you have used Atari DOS.

It shows the Filename, Extender, and the Size of the file, in Single Density sectors. The "nnn", of course, is the number of actual free sectors on your drive. The "\*" shows all files that are Write-Protected, and we'll cover that in another section of the tutorial.

You will notice, if you do a DIRS on the backup MASTER, you will NOT find a program called "DIRS" anywhere on the disk.

This is because some SDCS commands are "internal" or "built-in" to the DOS. DIRS happens to be one of them. There are many more, which are documented in the manual.

Now, let's try something different. This time, type in "DIR" at the D1: prompt. What in the world is all this data we're seeing??? Here's what you might see (using the same example filenames shown above):

-----

```
Volume:  MASTER
Directory:  MAIN

MYFILE  BAS    5120  2-12-85 6:38p
TESTFILE COM   3072  3-10-85 11:22a
YOURFILE TXT  25856  4-11-85 2:06p
HISFILE  LST   57344  2-24-85 6:16p
(etc...)
```

nnn FREE SECTORS

-----

What you are seeing here, is the new SpartaDOS directory listing!!

A quick note at this point before I continue. You can also do a directory via the DIR or DIRS commands like:

-----

```
D1:DIR(s) Dn:<CR>
```

-----  
This syntax, of course, gives you a directory on any active drive # that you currently have on-line.

Notice, when you do a DIRS, that instead of showing you file sizes in SECTORS, you now have a more accurate listing showing the number of BYTES (one byte = one character) in the file!!

Something that is not discussed very often is the difference between Single, Dual/Enhanced, and Double Density, and what makes them different.

Without going into great detail, the main difference depends on numerous things all combined together.

Single Density (SD) can store 90K of data on one Floppy disk. Dual/Enhanced Density (ED) are one and the same, and will store about 130K on your floppy. Double Density (DD) then, will store 180K of data on an Atari floppy disk.

However, Atari does not have a true DD DOS. SpartaDOS does, and this, basically, is the way it works.

Atari DOS's are designed to format disks with Single Density, 128-Byte Sectors (Each sector is 128 bytes long).

SpartaDOS, however, will not only format a few more sectors on the same kind of disk, but they are 256-Byte Sectors. Twice as many bytes!! See? DOUBLE DENSITY!!

Ok, let's get back to the issue at hand. To the right of the file size, in the last example, you will see another nifty addition. This is the time/date stamp of each and every file you save on the disk.

Simply put, you set the time/date when you boot up the SDCS, or use the R-Time8 cartridge by ICD (show ya how later), and every file saved after that point will be saved with the current time/date!!

This is great when you have to see which version of your file is the latest one! You can't do that with Atari DOS (any

version). This is just one of the benefits of using SpartaDOS, and it's associated files.

At the top of the screen, you'll notice that SpartaDOS also lists a VOLUME NAME and a DIRECTORY NAME.

First, when you format a new disk (Like you did when you made your backup...you DID make a backup right?), SpartaDOS asks you what VOLUME NAME you would like.

This is similar to putting a label on your diskette, but does NOT replace the label! This helps you keep track of all your files.

For example, for disks with games on them, you can use Volume names like: Games1, Games2, etc...and you are not limited to just the standard ASCII characters.

You can use "ANY" legal Atari character in a Volume name...even inverse video! The maximum name length is 8 characters, just like a standard Atari filename without the extender.

Next comes the Directory name. Where did that thing come from!?!? Well, SpartaDOS does this for you. Every disk you format will be stamped with the MAIN directory. But, what is a directory? That is covered in another part of this tutorial. Let's do things one at a time.

Using SpartaDOS, you are also able to create a "SUBDIRECTORY". We'll talk about that later too, but for now, let's just say that the MAIN directory is where you always start, and all subdirectories fall UNDER the main directory.

So, now you know how to get two different directory listings on your TV/Monitor screen.

This may sound rather silly, but practice these COMMANDS a few times (DIRS and DIR), so that they become very familiar to you. These are the most often used SpartaDOS commands.

Do a directory (DIR) on the back side of the "grape" disk now. See anything

different? You bet! There's a stranger on that disk! You'll see something that looks like:

```
-----  
Volume:  GAMES  
Directory:  MAIN  
  
DIR_1      <DIR> 1-01-84 4:33P  
DIR_2      <DIR> 1-01-84 4:33P  
AUTORUN  SYS   2291  8-26-85 9:00A  
  
40 FREE SECTORS  
-----
```

The "<DIR>" in the above listing say's that this line entry is a SUBDIRECTORY. Just for grins, let's type in the following line, and I'll explain what the ">" means when we discuss SUB-DIRECTORIES in Part #2 of the SpartaDOS Tutorial:

```
-----  
D1:DIR DIR_1>  
-----
```

This gives you a listing of files that have been stored UNDER the MAIN Directory and WITHIN the DIR\_1> Sub- Directory! Notice the new Directory name at the top of the screen?

```
-----  
Volume:  GAMES  
Directory:  DIR_1  
  
MYRAPEDE  COM   13332  1-01-84 3:59P  
MONEY     COM    2937  4-19-85 9:07P  
FIREBUG   COM    4872  1-01-84 3:59P  
RACE      COM    4107  1-01-84 3:59P  
ANDROTON  COM   10485  1-01-84 3:59P  
POPCORN   COM    3567  1-01-84 3:59P  
FILLERUP  COM    3266  1-01-84 3:59P  
  
40 FREE SECTORS  
-----
```

That new Directory name matches the name in the MAIN Directory for that SubDirectory? Nice, huh? While I'm on the subject, have you noticed anything else different in that Directory name? It's



the "\_" character.

Under SpartaDOS, you can now use the UNDERSCORE as a legal filename character. Just another benefit with SpartaDOS.

SubDirectories are one of the best ways to keep your files organized. Store all your matching files within its own separate SubDirectory!! I'll show you how to do that in Part #2.

There is also one other DIR-type command under SpartaDOS, and it is used very little, but does wonders for you when you are lost in the bowels of your SubDirectories.

It is called the "?DIR" command, and using it will allow you to find the current pathname (there's another word that you will have to familiarize yourself with) to where you are.

It'll be better to discuss this when we talk about SubDirectories in Part #2. As you can probably tell, there is a lot to learn about SpartaDOS Directories and SubDirectories.

At this time, we should discuss the use of something called "WILDCARDS".

It's a real good idea to use wildcards as often as possible since it will save you a lot of time and typing, but \*BEWARE\*!!

If you use the wrong wildcard, or use them without thinking about what, exactly, you are doing, you could very possibly destroy the contents of an ENTIRE DISK!! Use some thought while using wildcards.

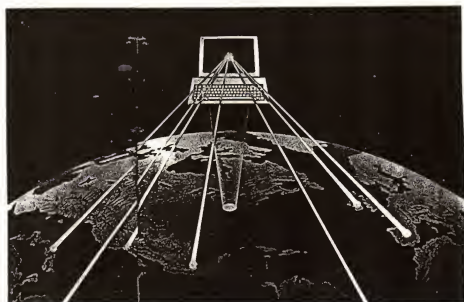
There are two different types of wildcards. They are the asterisk (\*) and the question mark (?). Let's start with the question mark, and I'll keep all explanations as simple as possible.

The "?" wildcard replaces a SINGLE character. For example, if you are searching through your disks for a specific file, you can replace any character in a filename (or extender), with the "?".

Let's say you are looking for a file called GAME1.BAS on a disk. You could type the following command line syntax:

# JOIN DELPHI TODAY

GET FULL ACCESS TO THE INTERNET



Delphi is the only on-line service that offers full access to the Internet. Since there is a lot of 8-Bit activity on the Internet, Delphi is a great choice for 8-Bit users. Join Delphi today, and take advantage of the special trial offer. Get 5 hours of free online time for \$5. For more information, dial via modem, 1-800-695-4636. When connected press RETURN a couple of times. At the password prompt, type INFO.

**Join today and check out the Internet.**

-----  
D1:Dir Game?.Bas  
-----

Which of the following will that command syntax find?:

- <1> GAME1.OBJ
- <2> GAME1.BAS
- <3> GAMER.BAS
- <4> GAME10.BAS
- <5> GAME2.BAS

Answers: 2, 3, AND 5

It won't find #1 since it has a different extender (.OBJ).  
It won't find #4 since there are too many & characters in the filename.

Now let's say you are looking for all files that begin with "GAM" and end with any extender. You would now use the "\*" wildcard, and an example is shown below:

-----  
D1:DIR GAM\*.\*  
-----

Which of the following files will that command syntax find?:

- <1> GAME1.OBJ
- <2> GAME1.BAS
- <3> GAME1.TXT
- <4> GAMING.001
- <5> GAMEDISK.DAT

Answer: All Files!

All those files would be found. I mentioned that if you are not careful, you could cause drastic results. Think about this syntax:

-----  
D1:ERASE \*.\*  
-----

Don't laugh...I've done this. I had "thought" that I was deleting all the files off of the floppy disk, but I had neglected to check what

my default drive was, and actually erased the entire contents of one Hard Drive partition. 15 Megabytes! So, be VERY careful when using wildcards in your command syntax.

Now then...let's get on to another command. This time we'll look at "CAR".

This one is easy. Remember Atari DOS option "B"? It was the one that sent you to BASIC. This is known as the CARtridge area.

If you have a cartridge plugged into the computer, option "B" on Atari DOS 2.x would take you to it. With SpartaDOS, you simply type CAR. It's that easy. To get back to the DOS menu; or in our case the D1: prompt, you type DOS. CAR is another internal SpartaDOS command.

Here's a problem you might have faced while using Atari DOS. Let's say, while booting up your DOS you held down the option key. This tells the computer that you do NOT want the built-in BASIC, but would rather go directly to the menu.

It's happy to oblige, and does this nicely. But, what if, at a later period, you needed that BASIC area? Right...you have to reboot the system. This alone causes excessive wear on the power supply and disk drive.

SpartaDOS, on the other hand, has another internal command set called "BASIC". Under SpartaDOS, simply type "BASIC ON" or "BASIC OFF" at the D1: Command prompt, and you will get the same result without rebooting the entire system!

This command installs or removes the internal BASIC on the XL/XE computers.

It is NOT a functional command on the SpartaDOS 1.x version, only the 2.x, 3.x, and future versions.

Beware of this command. If you have a BASIC file in the computers memory, and you go to DOS and say BASIC OFF, you WILL lose the BASIC program, so save it to disk first!

Ok. Now let's look briefly at the four (4) FORMAT commands in SpartaDOS. I intentionally left these commands out at the beginning of the tutorial so that you could read about them indepth from the manual. I'll just clarify a few minor points, and then go on to the next command.

The four FORMAT commands are:

```
<1> FORMAT (External)
<2> INIT (External)
<3> AINIT * (Internal)
<4> XINIT (External)
```

These are all EXTERNAL files found on the master disks except AINIT, which is internal. Let's look at that one first.

SYNTAX = D1:AINIT

AINIT is a SpartaDOS command used to initialize a floppy disk in the Atari DOS 2.0S format. It will ask you only one question. The question is "ARE YOU SURE?". If you are, type "Y", and the format procedure begins without further prompting.

For you Hard Disk and RAMdisk users out there in Atari-Land, DO NOT USE THIS COMMAND TO FORMAT THE HARD/RAM DISKS! I did. Again, I acted before I looked, and forgot to change the Dn: prompt to the drive I wanted to format.

In one instance, I was using my 30MEG Hard Drive, and the other time, the IMEG MIO RAMdisk. I wanted to format the floppy. \*SIGH\*.

I inserted a blank floppy into D2: and below is what was on the screen when I typed "Y" after the "Are You Sure ?" prompt:

```
-----
D1:AINIT
-----
```



Can you see the problem? Right! I was still on D1:! Now, SpartaDOS did as I COMMANDED it to do, and began to format D1:. In less than the time it takes to type "OOPS", I had formatted my 30MEg Hard Drive (and at a later time, the RAMdisk)! Can you guess what I got when I did a directory of the Drives? Right again! 707 FREE (SD) SECTORS!! (A 30MEG Hard Drive will normally produce over 51,000 FREE DD sectors, and the 1MEg gives about 4095.) A lesson learned. Painful, but probably necessary, and once I had my heart restarted, I found that I had lost ALL the data (About 2 months work), and had to begin again. Deep sorrow and many tears.

FORMAT and INIT are basically the same program. FORMAT is a stripped down version of INIT.

SYNTAX = Dn:FORMAT or Dn:INIT

The manual goes into great detail on the INIT command, so I'll leave the reading to you. I couldn't explain it better.

The FORMAT command does the same thing as INIT, but defaults to the .DOS file that it finds on the disk you booted with. Everything else is basically the same as INIT. Both of these files will only format 1.x SpartaDOS diskettes.

To initialize a version 2.x or 3.x diskette (FLOPPY ONLY), you would have to use XINIT. This is a very nice format routine with many selections to choose from in the process. I would suggest using XINIT to format all SpartaDOS Floppy disks with the latest version of the DOS.

SYNTAX = Dn:XINIT

Once you type XINIT, the XINIT menu selections are shown on your monitor as follows below:

Note: Any version of SpartaDOS that you have will show up on this menu if it ends with an extender of ".DOS"

-----  
Select SpartaDOS Version:

- 1) X23D
- 2) X23E

3) X32D  
N) -No DOS-

Choice ?

-----  
Choose the version of SpartaDOS that you want written to your new disk, or select -No DOS- if you want the disk formatted but not to have DOS written to the diskette.

Once you have made your choice, you will see:

-----  
Drive To Format ?

-----  
Select the drive number, 1 through 8, that your blank Floppy disk is in.  
Once selected, you will see:

-----  
Select Number Of Tracks:

1) 40 Trks/ss	5) 40 Trks/ds
2) 77 Trks/ss	6) 77 Trks/ds
3) 80 Trks/ss	7) 80 Trks/ds
4) 35 Trks/ss	8) 35 Trks/ds

-----

Making your choice on this menu may be confusing to some. Just remember, YOU CAN'T FOOL THE SYSTEM. If you are using a 1050 drive or most other standard Atari-type drives, you would select option #1 in the above menu.

Options 1-4 are for single-sided drives, and options 5-8 are for double-sided drives.

Any other choice may format your disk, but will NOT give true results as you may have thought.

Once this choice has been made, the next selection is:

-----  
Select Density:

1) Single Density

- 2) Double Density
  - 3) 1050 Double Density (Enhanced)
- 

After you select what you need, you will see:

-----  
Volume Name ?  
-----

At this time, choose any 8 character name that you want to call your disk; and you may use "ANY" Atari character in this Volume name.

Then you will be prompted to make the decision:

-----  
UltraSpeed Sector Skew?  
-----

You may use Ultra Speed Sector Skew option ONLY if you have installed the ICD US Doubler Chips. Otherwise type "N"o.

There is one final thing:

-----  
Insert Diskette to Format,  
Press <Return> when ready.  
-----

...and that's it... That's all there is to format a disk with all your own specialized needs. Now let's check that newly formatted diskette to see exactly what you have created.

To do this, you'll need to know another SpartaDOS command..."CHKDSK".

SYNTAX = Dn:CHKDSK

(You may do a CHKDSK on another drive in your system by typing this command in the format of "D1:CHKDSK Dn:").

This is approximately what you will see if you do a CHKDSK command on the Black-Labelled MASTER disk:

-----  
Volume: V3.2d E4 54  
Bytes/Sector: 128  
Total Bytes: 92160  
Bytes Free: 7424  
Write Lock: OFF  
-----

Very simply, Volume is the Volume name that ICD typed in when formatting the original MASTER diskette. You will see your own Volume name here if you do a CHKDSK on your own disks.

The 2 sets of numbers to the right of the Volume Name are random numbers that SpartaDOS placed there. This is done to prevent confusion within SpartaDOS during "copy" functions, for one. The manual explains these perfectly.

Bytes/Sector will immediately tell you what density this diskette has been formatted in. What density is 128 Bytes/Sector? Right...Single density.

To prove this, look at the Total Bytes line. It shows you that this diskette, when formatted, had 92160 total bytes available. But, ICD has put many files on this disk, so now this reading shows that we only have 7424 bytes left on the disk to store more data.

We also see that the disk is NOT Write-Locked (it's OFF). SpartaDOS has a nice disk protection scheme, and I'll go over that in a future part of the tutorial.

So...that means that this is the end of Part #1 of the SpartaDOS Tutorial.

I hope I didn't confuse you too much, but the manual should be able to clear things up. It's an excellent manual.

Stay tuned for more simple SpartaDOS explanations in Part #2, brought to you by Mister <Z> Hissself.

Network: Atari  
5831 Sun Bay  
San Antonio, Tx.  
78244

This article was downloaded from Genie's Software Library, file name *Spartan.TXT*. I was recently informed that all of you do not have access to a modem or Genie, so I decided to reprint it in this issue of Atari 8-Bit Alive. The only editing I did to this article was to remove some of the spacing so that I could make more room. I hope you enjoyed the article and will be looking forward to Part 2.

## Batch File Menu Loader

When I turn on a PC, Mac, Tandy, or Atari ST, most likely I will not see a "D1:" prompt or even an A: prompt. Most likely I'll see a nice menu or picture from which I can choose the program I want to load, by pressing a button. I don't have to remember file names, nor do I have to remember subdirectories. It's a nice system, and not complicated at all.

From reading an article in Current Notes, I found out that the menu system I praised so much was nothing more than a good use of batch files. (The article is in the October 1992 issue, entitled "Making Batch Files Work For You," by John Sandgren. This is a great article, and I suggest you read it if you haven't already.) That makes the 8-Bit able to use the same system if you use Spartados 3.2d,f,g or Spartados X.

The reason batch file menus are better than menu programs is because there is a whole lot less memory mix-up and by using batch files, you can load both machine language and basic programs, at the touch of a button. The article in Current Notes showed how to set up your own system using batch files, custom menus, and the type command. This article will focus on a batch file menu loader designed by Dan Knauf.

This program sets up a neat looking menu of programs and loads the batch file that will run the corresponding program.

### Setting Your Menu System Up

The first thing you have to do to set up your menu system is download the Batch File Menu Loader. The only place I've seen this program is on The Computer World Jr. BBS (716-243-5588). The file is called ICDPACK.ARC. Extract the programs with query, and get the files Batmenu.Com and Batmenu.Dat. Save these files to the same disk you plan on putting the programs you want to load. It is preferred that this disk be a hard disk, or else you probably wouldn't have much use for his program.

The next thing you have to do is create batch files that will load the programs you have on the disk. If you have never done this before it's simple. Just create it from your word processor's text editor and save it. For example, suppose you called TPX520.COM, which happens to be Textpro 5.20xe. Type the following on your text editor:

```
Basic Off  
TPX520.COM
```

Then save the file under any name you want. I suggest, however, that you use the



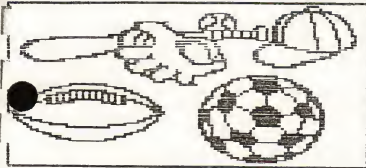
extension "BAT." You do the same for all of your batch files putting needed commands to load the program from the d1: prompt on the editor, each followed by a carrier return. Now that you have created all of your batch files, you can binary load Batmenu.COM from the D1: prompt. You'll now see a bunch of letters with the word "unassigned" next to them. It's now time to enter your program names. Press "Control-F" and the letter you want to name followed by the program name. Then press return. The program will ask which batch file to load. Type in the batch file name that will load the program you previously typed. After you have finished entering your programs, press Escape. You can now select a letter and watch the corresponding program load. If while entering your programs, you run out of letters, just press the space bar for a new list.

Suppose you are like me, and have more than 52 programs you frequently use. You can copy Batmenu.COM and Batmenu.DAT to each subdirectory you have. Then create a menu subdirectory, with batch files in it that will enter the appropriate subdirectory and load the Batmenu.COM program. Then you can load the programs in each subdirectory in at the touch of a button.

To make your menu appear on the screen at boot up, just create a batch file

that will load Batfile.COM, and save it in the main directory under the file name "Startup.Bat."

If you have any questions about setting up this program, contact me by one of the ways in the front of the magazine.



# THE GAME ROOM



## CHECKERS

Are you a checkers fan?  
Do you like challenge?  
Would you like to learn to  
play checkers? Do you play  
checkers, but get bored  
because of the lack of a  
good opponent? If you  
answered yes to any of these  
questions, then this game is  
for you.

Tournament Checkers by  
Dave Butler is the most  
challenging and fun game  
that I have yet to see for  
the 8-bit. If you are a  
beginner, it teaches you how  
to play the game; if you re  
an expert, it will be  
extremely challenging. I've  
played this game several  
times and have yet to come  
close to beating the  
computer without cheating,  
and even when I cheated, the  
computer beat me. This game  
was made for the American  
Checker Federation and is  
truly amazing.

### Here's how to operate this game

It's easy, just load  
the game. It's a binary  
file, so from Spartados you  
can load it from the D1:

prompt. From Ataridos or  
Mydos, you have to quit to  
the DOS menu and select "L"  
to load it. Once it's  
loaded, the game tells you  
what to do. First it asks  
you to press the trigger.  
At this prompt, you may  
either press the trigger or  
press RETURN. (It's faster  
to press RETURN). Next the

program gives you some  
general information about  
the American Checkers  
Federation, which prior to  
now, I did not know existed.  
After reading this  
information, you can press  
any key to get to the  
commands menu. From the  
commands menu, you may begin  
your game. Before your  
game, however, do look at  
the commands menu, because  
those are the commands you  
use while playing the game.

One thing I like about  
this game is the ability for  
it to teach you to play the  
game. People say the best  
way to learn is to learn  
from your mistakes. I  
believe this is true. That  
is exactly what this game  
does. For instance, let's  
suppose you make a bad move.

The computer double jumps you, and takes two of your men. To see what you did wrong, or to try something else, just press "T" and the computer will take both the move it made and the move you made, therefore setting up the exact same situation you had before you made your "dumb" (oops) move.

If you are really good at this game, it can take the computer a while to beat you. Most of us do not have 3 and 4 hours in a row to sit in front of the computer. No problem, you can press "3" to save the game. The next time you boot Checkers, just press "L" to load the game and continue.

Let's say you liked the game you just played, but you don't think you will remember the moves you made to use them again. Just press "P" to print the game to your printer.

This game is absolutely flawless. I guarantee you will not beat the computer - unless you cheat! I don't care which of the three levels you are on. There is a way to cheat and win, however, I'm not going to spoil your fun. This game is available on the Computer World, Jr. BBS; (716) 247-8355, Checker.OBJ and probably Genie, but I'm not sure about that. I think any serious checker player should have this game.

## Game Tip Of The Month

This month's Game Tip Of The Month has to do with a game called Fight Night. Fight Night is a boxing game made by the Atari Corporation. This game not only allows you to box with the men it gives you, but allows you to create your own men and save them to a disk. Try this game. It is available at B & C Computervisions or American Technavision.

### The Tip Is This:

When boxing, the best way to win is to first back your opponent into the corner of the ring so he cannot move back any further. Then hold the joystick up and hold the button down. When your opponent starts to block your punches, then shift the joystick down. Continue doing this without letting go of the button so your opponent doesn't have a chance to punch back. Remember to be careful of the special moves of your opponent, and you should win everytime. Good luck!



# ATARI 8-BIT ONLINE



---

## ATARI 8-BIT ONLINE NEWS

This month I have a special "treat" for you. My recent switch from Compuserve to Genie has allowed me to give you not only Compuserve and Fidonet News, but also what's happening on Genie. After this issue, however, I will only be bringing you Genie and Fidonet news. (If anyone who is currently a Compuserve subscriber and wishes to submit an article, I'd be happy to include it. Just contact me by any one of the ways listed in the front of the magazine.

### Compuserve News

Things on Compuserve have picked up considerably. There has been a lot of new messages in the message bases. Since I have been reading messages off-line, I have been able to keep up with the messages a lot easier and save money, too. In the month of September, I counted over 100 new messages. That's great! The message ranged from upgrading a 65XE, to ???. There are also quite a bit of hardware and software

being sold.

In addition to the many messages this, there has been a lot of new files these past two months. These files are probably the best files uploaded in a long while. Check them out.

### Genie News

Since I have not used Genie in almost 7 months, I had to really refresh my memory. The return to Genie was a pleasant one. Atari 8-bit action on Genie is incredible compared to all the other 8-bit supporters I have seen.

The message bases were full with many topics ranging from new hardware to the new PCX forum. However, the most discussed topic are the FJC products. To me, there are a lot of people who aren't so sure that FJC is going to come through, simply because they haven't seen enough proof. There are also a handful of people who have all the faith in the world in FTE, and are

trying to convince others. Mike, from FTE, has been answering a lot of questions on the Genie BBS in Category 5. So, if you are wondering about any of the FTE products, the Genie BBS is a good place to find out. There is an awful lot of discussion about the MIO II and the Mars 8. Please join in.

The file library is not as active as I remember it being when I was last on Genie, though it still is pretty busy. The Sysop has been faithfully uploading InfoDigests, which contain 8-bit messages from the internet. These files contain a lot of valuable information, and I recommend downloading as many of these files as you can.

#### The Real-Time Conference

The Real-Time conferences on Genie are always exciting. My first time joining the conference was truly rewarding. Questions are asked and answered almost immediately. The last two conferences both had 7 people. Mike from FTE even joined us in one of the conferences. The Real-Time conferences are probably the best feature of Genie, and if at all possible, please join us.

#### Fidonet News

Fidonet has been more active this month than it ever has. On the average,

there has been about 25 new messages a day. Like on Genie, there is a considerable amount of talk about the MIO II FTE plans to release. There are also some talk on Flickerterm 80, the new 80 column terminal program for the 8-bit. There is a lot that can be found out on Fidonet, and it very cost effective. So try it out. If you need a local Fidonet BBS, contact me by any of the ways in the front of the magazine. I'll see what I can do.

That's it for the "8-bit Online News". Please join us online for a great time.

# COMPUSERVE

**SUPPORTS ATARI 8-BITS**



Join a number of Atari 8-bit users that are enjoying the advantages of Compuserve. With Compuserve, you can download new files for your computer, join 8-Bit conferences, post messages on 8-Bit BBS's, and send E-mail to other 8-bit users. Also, enjoy Compuserve's other great services such as The Electronic Mall, Reference Services, Entertainment Services, and much more!

**To join, just call 1-800-848-8199.**

MiniCompuserve  
(MCIS version 3.0)

The Compuserve message forums are a great place for us, information hungry eight bitter to both get and share ideas. It would be great if we could use Pabquick or Qwk8 to read the messages offline, so that we wouldn't have such an enormous bill. I mean, reading forum messages and replying to them can be an hour long project. At one hour everyday, that can add up to \$150.00 a month, just in forum message reading. That doesn't include file transfers, and anything else you may want to do on Compuserve. That's a lot of money, and it can be twice that price if you have to call long distance to connect. On the other have, if you only take two minutes to download your messages, and another two minutes to upload your replies, it will only be about 10.00 a month, in forum reading. That's a big savings! (These prices are doing the non-prime-time hours.)

The problem with downloading messages with your capture feature, is that they get confusing to read, and it can be very inconvenient. We can use an offline reader like Pabquick or QWK8, because Compuserve will not put messages into QWK. format. So we just settle for reading messages once or twice a month.

Well settle no longer. I have discovered a program, written by Bill Avcock, that will allow you to conveniently and easily read messages offline. You can now, capture all new messages, save them to a disk, and read them both time and cost efficient. The program is not new, but this is the first time I have seen it, and I'm sure I'm not the only one that hasn't seen this problem. That's my loss though.

How it Works

This is a simple yet brilliant program (When I say "simple," I'm talking about the concept. I could never write a program like it.) You just set your configurations in the Compuserve message forums. to do this, select "8" "Set Options from the Forum Main Menu. Where Compuserve asks whether to stop between messages, set it for never. Now you are set. Select message forum from the main forum menu. Then type RN, for Read New messages, turn your capture on and press return. (Option will turn the capture button if you're using Bobterm.) Tell of the messages that you haven't read yet will scroll quickly down the screen. When the messages are finished, save your capture to a disk, ram disk, or hard drive, and log off. Most of the time, that



disk, or hard drive, and log off. Most of the time, that won't take any more than 2 minutes.

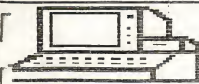
After you've "downloaded" the message, you can load Mini-Compuserve. To begin reading the messages, you can load Mini-Compuserve. To begin reading the messages you must create an index file. You do this by selecting Mini-Compuserve's Create Index command. MCIS will then ask you to enter the file name of the messages you have counted. MCIS then begins creating an index file, using the # sign that appears in front of each message to tell the beginning and end of each message. You are now completely ready to read the messages.

Type "R" to begin reading the messages. MCIS then begins displaying the message on the screen one at a time. While reading messages, you have a number of different ways to read the messages. You can read the entire message from the first to the last message, or you may read the messages backwards, beginning with the last message. You can read just the headers, which include who the message is to, who it is from, and the subject. You can also read certain message number, in case you are looking for a particular message. While reading the messages, you can mark certain messages by pressing return, and print the marked messages to your

printer for a permanent copy. You may also just read the marked messages over again.

Another neat feature this program has is the ability to search for text. That can come in handy when you are searching for a message containing particular information.

This is truly a great program. It can literally save you hours of online time, and therefore save you money. If you use Compuserve, this program is a must. The only place I have seen it is on compuserve in Lib. 5, file name MCIS3.ARC. Try it! Guaranteed to save you money.



# HARDWARE



## REVIEWS



### MAKING MY 130XE INTO A HARD DRIVE SYSTEM (THE DO S AND DON 'TS)

I have an interesting story for you this month. It's about all my trials and tribulations that I faced when trying to connect a hard drive to my 130XE. This was my first time, so I made quite a few mistakes. For those of you looking to connect a hard drive to your 8-bit system for the first time, hopefully you can learn from my mistakes. For those of you who are already experienced with connecting a hard drive to an 8-bit, just sit back, and get a kick of my "stupid" mistakes.

Previous to my new addition, my computer system consisted of a 130XE, MIO Board, 1050 disk drive, Atari matrix printer, a KM301 300bps modem, a Practical Peripherals 2400 bps Hayes compatible mode, a Nec Monitor, and Spartados 3.2d. The system was perfect; everything I needed and more, except for one thing. It was just too slow loading files. My first idea to speed up the file loading process was to store

my most frequently used programs into the 255K ram disk on the MIO. I speeded up the loading process, but every time there was a storm and the electricity went out, all the files were erased. This was during the spring in South Jersey, so we had plenty of storms. This irritated me to no end. In addition to the storms, I started using more programs. 255K was just not enough room anymore. I had to get a hard drive. With the MIL's SCSI interface, what was stopping me?

First, I had to think about what size drive I needed. I thought about it, and came to the conclusion that since I don't run a BBS and I don't have too large of a collection of programs, 10 meg should be more than enough. So the search was on for a 10 meg hard drive. (Of course, the only 10 meg hard drive around in this day and age are used). Then I thought I better call someone more experienced with hard drives and the MIO to find out exactly what I need to get. "Who better to

call than the infamous Bob Puff, of Computer Software services", I thought.

It's a good thing I called him, or I would have never known a needed a drive with a separate controller. He told me that my best bet would be to get an old MFM drive, with a separate controller. That's exactly what I ordered. At a great price, too! Everything, including the power supply and necessary cords only cost me \$50.00, from San Jose Computers.

When I received the hard drive, I made my first and crucial mistake. I disconnected the drive from the controller. Sound small and insignificant? Well, listen to what happens.

I took the drive and controller upstairs to my computer system and hooked it up. However, when I did so, I connected one of the cords from the drive to the controller in the wrong place. I turned on my computer and went to the configuration menu to configure the hard drive for the MIO. The MIO asked for the following information:

Type: (Hard, Floppy,  
Ram)  
ID,LUN: (0,0)  
Size: (10000K)  
Cylinders: (306)  
Heads: (4)  
Starting Sec 1  
Ending Sec+1 (40004)

I didn't know any responses except for the drive type. I called San Jose computers to aks them for the rest of the information. He told me that the drive had 305 cylinders, 4 heads, and the ID,LUN: was probably 0,0. He said he hadn't a clue what the starting and ending sector was. So, I tried formatting the disk with HDINIT from Spartados 3.2d using the information I had. (I had no idea the MIO would give me the starting and ending sector once I formatted it using HDFMTPH9.COM off of the MIO disk). Another mistake. You must use HDFMTPH9.COM before using the HDINIT.COM (Since I had the drive connected to the controller wiring, neither would have worked anyway).

I thought the problem was I did not know the starting and ending sector. I called at least 10 different places on a Saturday morning trying to find out the starting and ending sector. All of them said the same thing, "I haven't any idea". (Some of them, of course, being IBM and MAC dealers had their little snips about me still using Atari). I even took the drive to a computer dealer, and he could help me. Since it was Saturday, I could not call CSS, because they were closed. So, I called one of my subscribers, Charles Cole. I had remembered that he told me he had a hard drive for his 130XE Fidonet. He told me that the MIO would automatically get the starting and ending sector after

being formatted. I still just could not format the hard drive.

On Monday, I called Bob Puff at CSS to see if he could help me. He told me I had to use HDFMTPH9.COM from the MIO disk to format it. I didn't have a MIO disk, however, because my MIO was given to me. Now, I had to see where I could get one. I called every 8-bit software dealer I knew, but none of them had the disk or program. Then I remembered Frank Walter writing a message about his MIO on Fidonet. I also remembered that he had a BBS of his own (T.A.C.O. Bell BBS, 904-785-2333, an excellent BBS which he runs only to help other 8-biters. It's people like him who keep this computer truly alive). I called his BBS immediately, and he told me that he would leave the disk in my E-mail. I downloaded it and ran HDFMTPH6.COM several times, but it still did not work. Then while logged onto another 8-Bit BBS, I can't recall which one, I found the number to ICD's BBS (815-968-2229). If anyone would have the file, the makers would. I immediately called the BBS, and sure enough, they had the file. I downloaded it and tried it out, but it still didn't work.

As a last resort, I disconnected the whole drive from the controller and reconnected it. This time I connected it correctly, by

accident. I ran HDFMTPH9.COM again and it worked! I then ran HDINIT from Spartados 3.2d and copied X32.DOS to it. I booted the DOS, copied my programs to it and set up a menu system using batch files, and tested it. It worked great.

I, now, have a fast, complete, easy to use, computer system. It took me a long, long, time and a lot of unnecessary work, but I did it. Hopefully, you can learn from my mistakes and it will only take you a couple of minutes.

**RUBBER CITY**

**ATARI BBS**

300 TO 14400 BAUD

(216) 376-0885

**ATARINET 51:203-/13.0**  
**AKRON, OHIO'S**  
**OLDEST ATARI BBS**  
**EST. 1982**

FULL SUPPORT FOR ALL ATARI  
COMPUTERS

\*\*\*ATARI 8-BIT\*\*\*  
\*\*\*ST/STE/TT/FALCON\*\*\*

*SYSOP: DON CRANO*

## The Best 8-Bit Upgrades (Part 3)

Welcome back to yet another article of "The Best 8-Bit Upgrades." In part 2, we talked about different types of disk drives for the 8-Bit, along with each of their advantages and disadvantages. This time, we will be talking about an upgrade that has become almost a necessity for 8-biters in recent years. This upgrade is the infamous modem. For those of you who don't know what a modem is, a modem is a piece of hardware that allows you to communicate with other computers using a telephone line (go online!). With a modem, you can instantly receive and send information or programs, have conferences with people around the world, and play games with people in different locations. Some of these depend on you terminal program and online service, but it is all possible with a modem.

I say that a modem is so important to us 8-biters now, because most of the new software is dispersed using a modem. It is also important because it is the best way to get information from other users, and give information to them, about your computer once it has been abandoned by the manufacturer.

### Speeds

Modems come in many different speeds. The higher

the baud rate, the faster the speed. It is important that you select a modem that will suit your needs. I will try to help you by giving you a full description of each speed available today.

### 300 Baud

Your baud rate is how fast your modem is. The higher your baud rate, the faster your modem. 300 baud is the slowest speed available today. When using a three hundred baud modem, characters scroll across the screen at about 300 per second. You can see each letter appear on the screen, and if you are a speed reader, you can probably read the words as they appear. When transferring files, this speed is extremely slow, and if using this speed to transfer a file from a long distance computer, you can cost yourself a fortune. The best thing these modems do is communicate in Real-Time. Real-Time is when you are typing to someone who is sitting at their computer and they are typing directly back to you. It is best to stay away from these modems if you can, because many BBS's do not support such low speeds anymore, however, the price will definitely attract anyone. The best 300 baud modem for the 8-Bit is the XM301. It costs \$19.95 at B & C Computervisions, and is a



direct connect modem.

### 1200 Baud

If you only go online occasionally, then this is the modem for you. It is 4 times faster than the 300 baud modem. With this modem, you can see the lines of text forming, but you can't actually see the words form. With file transfers, it is four times faster than the 300 baud modem. Most BBS's will allow you to log on at 1200 baud, however, in the near future, they will not. This is already beginning to happen where I live. If you do not have an interface, a good 1200 baud, direct connect modem is available at B & C Computervisions. It is called the SX212 direct connect modem, and costs \$29.95.

### 2400 Baud

This is the most popular speed right now, however, with the development of newer, faster modems, 9600 baud is gaining a lot of popularity. With this speed, you can hardly see lines of text forming, and most of us cannot read what's on the screen until it stops scrolling. The file transfers are twice as fast as 1200 baud modems. Almost all BBS's will allow you to log on at this speed or lower. I recommend this speed to most people. This is the speed I mostly use with my 8-Bit.

To use a 2400 baud

modem, or any modem higher than 1200 baud, you need a RS232 interface. The Black Box, MIO Board, and the 850 are some of the most popular. Once you have an interface, you can use almost any Hayes compatible modem. At 2400 baud, the cost is anywhere from \$50 to \$100. They are available at almost any computer store.

### 9600 Baud

This speed is incredibly fast. At 9600 baud, you cannot see lines of text form and you can only read text after it has finished scrolling. File transfers are four times faster than 2400 baud modems. I use this speed very little, when I call long distance. I recommend this speed to people who go online everyday. The only interfaces that support modems this fast right now are the Black box and the MIO Board. These modems are available at most computer stores and cost from about \$99-\$150.

### Higher Speeds

There are higher speed modems on the market now such as 14,400 baud and 58,000 baud modems. I've never seen either of these, but they are widely available. There aren't any interfaces at this time for the 8-Bit that will support speeds that high, however, both FTE and CSS are currently working on one. I will let you know as soon as it is available.

### For Beginners

If you have a modem and are wondering what to do with it, please contact me by one of the ways in the front of the magazine. It wasn't but a year ago that I was in that exact position, and I know how to help you. Please do not hesitate to contact me.

### Wrapping Up

That's it for this month's hardware reviews. Please join me next issue for the final part of this four part series, and many more reviews.





# REFERENCE SECTION



## 8-Bit Tip of the Month

This month's Tip of the Month deals with the MIO Board. If you have a hard drive, with all of your most used programs on it, but also use other boot disks a lot, you might want to create a batchfile on your hard drive to load the boot disk for you, without having to go to the MIO configuration menu and swapping drives. This batchfile should switch drive 1 and 2 and reboot the system. To create this batchfile, you will need two programs, both available on Genie. They are XON.COM and DSWAP4.COM. Once you have these programs, set up your batchfile like this:

```
DSWAP /12 D2:CONTINUE.BAT 'RETURN'  
(swaps the drives and continues the procedure.)
```

Save this batchfile and set up another that looks like this:

```
D2: 'RETURN'  
XON 'RETURN'
```

Save this batchfile under the file name "Continue.Bat".

You may now run the first batchfile you saved. The computer should swap the drive assignments on the MIO, making the floppy drive 1 and the hard drive, drive 2. Then it will reboot the system.

Note: For this to work, Drive 1 must be the hard drive, and Drive 2 must be the floppy drive.

## ATARI 8-BIT DEALERS

Here is an updated list of Atari Dealers in the U.S. I know this information is hard to come by from personal experience, so I am printing this list to help you, the readers, out in purchasing equipment for your 8-Bit.

1. Aerion Software  
(212) 548-0514
2. American Techna-Vision  
(510) 352-3787
3. B & C Computervisions  
(408) 243-6950
4. Best Electronics  
(408) 243-6950
5. BRE Software  
(800) 347-6760 or (209) 432-3072
6. C&T ComputerActive  
(405) 323-5890
7. Computer Software Services  
(716) 429-5639
8. DynaComp Software  
(800) 828-6772 or (716) 265-4040
9. The Electronic Clinic  
(301) 656-7983
10. Evangelo's Atari Software  
(908) 558-9518
11. Fine Tooned Engineering  
(408) GET-REAL
12. Hobbytown Electronics  
(402) 289-3572
13. K-Products  
(801) 967-7400

14. L&Y Electronics  
(703) 494-3444
15. Mars Merchendising  
(708) MARS-INC
16. Purple Mountain Computers  
(206) 399-8700
17. San Jose Computers  
(408) 995-5080
18. Surplus Computer Software  
(714) 751 2667
19. Toad Computers  
(800) 448-TOAD
20. Zim Software Manufacturers

If any one has any additions to this list, please write me a letter, using one of the Addresses in the front of the Magazine.

## ATARI 8-BIT USER GROUP LIST

Since I have been writing Atari 8-Bit Alive, many people have been sending me their user group newsletters and different information on their user groups. I appreciate them doing this, and to help them increase their size, I am printing this list of different user groups, complete with there addresses and phone numbers. I hope that these user groups can work together in keeping this great computer alive.

Alamo Area Atari User Association  
P.O. Box 79-1426  
San Antonio, TX 78279

OL'Hackers U.G., Inc.  
C/O Alex Pignato  
3376 Ocean Harbor Drive  
Oceanside, NY 11572  
(516) 678-6081

P.A.C.E Atari User Group  
C/O Jean Brokaw  
958 Phyllis Ave.  
Largo, FL 34641  
(813) 531-3418

ATESIG  
Decker G. McAllister, Jr.  
145 Surf Place  
Seal Beach, CA 90740-5909  
(310) 430-5433

If anyone has any additions to this list, please let me know by one of the ways at the front of the magazine.

## Atari 8-Bit BBS's

Lately I've come across a lot of BBS that still support the 8-Bit. I think it is important that we support them also, so I'm printing this list to in hopes that you may log on to one or two of these BBS's and enjoy yourself.

The Computer World  
(716) 247-8355

CSS Suport BBS  
(716) 4295639

Rubber City Atari  
(216) 376-0885

Atari BBS  
(701) 727-4780

Atari ST BBS (504) 891-1388

Hopefully, this list will keep growing each month. Please support these SYSOPs who have supported us.

## Want Ads

### Rana Owners

Align & repair Rana drives yourself with help form the RANA Repair Guide. Complete schematics included. Just \$15.00.

from:

Paul V. Alhart  
524 North Zee St.  
Lompoc, CA 93436

### Wanted! Needed! Help!!

I am trying to find an XEP-80 module. I need one to use with Bobterm! 40 columns can be just to limiting! I have tons for trade, or will pay a reasonable price. Call (505) 896-0241, or write me at Adam Trionfo, 775 Garnet Drive, NE., Rio Rancho, NM 87124.

### Wanted: Atariwriter Plus

Looking for the Atariwriter Plus program. If you have one you are willing to sell, please contact me at (609) 299-4667.

## SUBSCRIPTION PAGE

### How do I subscribe??

Subscribing to this magazine is easy. Just fill out the bottom of the page and send to the following address with your first payment.

Damon Walker  
RD#1 Box 62  
Salem, NJ 08079

This magazine will be printed bi-monthly. For the remainder of 1994, this magazine will be published in July, September, and November. The cost is \$2.79 per issue, including shipping. For your convenience, you may pay for the next 3 issues at once at a cost of \$8.00. All payments are due prior to delivery. Please consider subscribing. I think it will be well worth it.

-----  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks for your interest. Enjoy the magazine!